

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Amend the paragraph starting in line 30 on page 4 as indicated:

In a first embodiment, the invention provides spherical particles for thermal spraying, consisting essentially of a rare earth (inclusive of yttrium)-containing compound and having a breaking strength of at least 10 MPa and an average particle diameter of 10 to 80  $\mu\text{m}$ , preferably 15 to 80  $\mu\text{m}$ . Most often, the rare earth-containing compound is a rare earth oxide, and more preferably the rare earth oxide is yttrium oxide or ytterbium oxide.

Amend the paragraph starting in line 1 on page 5 as indicated:

Thermal spraying spherical particles consisting essentially of a rare earth (inclusive of yttrium)-containing compound having a breaking strength of at least 10 MPa and an average particle diameter of 10 to 80  $\mu\text{m}$  are prepared by granulating rare earth (inclusive of yttrium)-containing compound (especially rare earth oxide) fines having a Fisher diameter of up to 0.6  $\mu\text{m}$ , or a yttrium or lanthanide-containing compound having an average particle diameter of 0.01 to 5  $\mu\text{m}$ , into granules.

Amend the paragraph starting in line 24 on page 5 as indicated:

The spherical particles have a particle size distribution in which a particle diameter D90, D50 and D10 corresponds to 90 vol%, 50 vol% and 10 vol% accumulation, respectively.

Preferably D90 is up to 100  $\mu\text{m}$ , more preferably up to 50  $\mu\text{m}$ , and the ratio of D50 to a Fisher diameter is up to 5. Also preferably, D10 is at least 5  $\mu\text{m}$ , more preferably at least 10  $\mu\text{m}$ , and a dispersion index is up to 0.6.

Amend the paragraph starting in line 14 on page 7 as indicated:

If the average particle diameter of thermal spray spherical particles is less than 10  $\mu\text{m}$ , some particles may gasify during the spraying step, resulting in a reduced yield. If the average particle diameter is more than 80  $\mu\text{m}$ , some particles may remain unmelted during the spraying step. The preferred average particle diameter is from 10 to 60  $\mu\text{m}$ , more preferably from 15 to 60  $\mu\text{m}$ .

Amend the paragraph starting in line 20 on page 7 as indicated:

Of the thermal spraying spherical particles, the spherical particles of rare earth-containing compound are prepared by granulating rare earth-containing compound fines having a Fisher diameter of up to 0.6  $\mu\text{m}$  into granules, and firing the granules at a temperature of 1,200 to 1,800°C, preferably at 1,500 to 1,800°C.